

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for automated generation of installation instructions for an executable software application, comprising:
 - a. retrieving template installation instruction information from a persistent data store;
 - b. deriving installation related information from configuration data associated with the application;
 - c. incorporating the derived installation related information into the template installation information to form installation instruction data; and
 - d. storing the derived installation instruction data.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein step (b) further comprises extracting installation data from the configuration data, the installation data comprising at least two of:
 - i. an identity of a directory to contain the application;
 - ii. an identity of data files comprising the application;
 - iii. an identity of a communication protocol to be used by the application;
 - iv. communication settings for the application;
 - v. suggested performance enhancement settings for the application; and
 - vi. prompting questions to be answered by a user upon installation of the application.
3. The method of claim 1, further comprising processing the derived installation instruction data for output.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein the step of processing the derived installation instruction data for output comprises formatting the derived installation instruction data as installation documentation for reproduction on an output device, the output device comprising a printer and a video display.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein the derived installation instruction data comprise installation instruction text data for output as installation documentation.
6. The method of claim 5, further comprising selecting an output format for the installation documentation, the output format comprising Rich Text Format, Microsoft® Word compatible format, HTML document format, and Extensible Mark-up Language (XML) compatible format.
7. The method of claim 1 wherein step (a) further comprises selecting a file containing the template installation instruction information from a plurality of files containing a corresponding plurality of installation instruction documentation templates.
8. The method of claim 1 further comprising creating a prompt question generating routine for inclusion in the installation instruction data by incorporating prompt questions into a predetermined question prompting procedure, the prompt questions being for answer by a user upon installation of the application.
9. The method of claim 8 wherein the prompt questions to be answered by a user upon installation of the application are derived from the configuration data.

10. The method of claim 1 further comprising creating prompt question documentation for inclusion in the installation instruction data, the prompt question being for answer by a user upon installation of the application.

11. The method of claim 1 further comprising providing a map for associating items of the derived installation related information and corresponding locations in the template installation information for use in incorporating the derived installation related information into the template installation information.

12. The method of claim 1, for applications to be used in exchanging data between a source application and a different destination application, further comprising prompting a user to select at least one of the source application and the destination application.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein:

- i. the system for automated generation of installation instruction documentation for an executable software application is located on a storage medium together with the application; and
- ii. the system is performed in response to at least one of initial access to the application and insertion of the storage medium in a processing system.

14. The method of claim 13 wherein the storage medium is a portable medium comprising removable magnetic media, removable optical media, and removable solid state media.

15. The method of claim 1 wherein the template installation instruction information comprises predetermined text installation instructions and an executable procedure for generating installation instructions upon procedure execution.

16. A method for automated generation of installation instructions for an executable software application, comprising:

- a. retrieving template installation instruction information from a data store, the installation instruction information including prompt questions for answer by a user upon installation of the application;
- b. deriving installation related information from configuration data associated with the application;
- c. incorporating the derived installation related information into the template installation information to form installation instruction data; and
- d. presenting the installation instruction data to a user during an installation of the application.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein step (c) further comprises processing the installation instruction data for output.

18. The method of claim 16, further comprising creating a prompt question generating procedure for generating the prompt questions for answer by the user.

19. The method of claim 16 further comprising selecting the prompt questions from a larger set of prompt questions.

20 A user interface method supporting installation of an executable software application, comprising:

- a. initiating display of application installation instructions including prompt questions for answer by a user upon installation of the application, the application installation instructions being formed by:
 - i. retrieving template installation instruction information from storage,
 - ii. deriving installation related information from configuration data associated with the application, and
 - iii. incorporating the derived installation related information into the template installation information to form the application installation instructions; and
- b. installing the executable software application in response to user command received via the displayed prompt questions.

21. A user interface method supporting automated generation of installation instruction documentation for an executable software application, comprising:

- a. initiating display of application installation instructions formed by:
 - i. retrieving template installation instruction information from storage, the installation instruction information including prompt questions for answer by a user upon installation of the application,
 - ii. deriving installation related information from configuration data associated with the application, and
 - iii. incorporating the derived installation related information into the template installation information to form the application installation instructions; and
- b. initiating display of the prompt questions for answer by a user upon installation of the application.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein

- a. the application is used in exchanging data between different source and destination applications, and
- b. the prompt questions prompt a user to select at least one of the source application and the destination application.

23. A system for automated generation of installation instructions for an executable software application, comprising:

- a. configuration data for a software interface;
- b. a template, comprising documentation and variables insertable into the documentation, the variables to be satisfied with one or more configuration data;
- c. a computer system comprising a memory and a processor; and
- d. software executable in the computer system for creating a data file containing installation data derived from configuration data and incorporated into the template, the installation data comprising documentation of an installation process for the software interface.